

Thanksgiving
Sermon October 7, 2018

Do you remember those moments when, before a meal, your mother and your father bowed their heads and closed their hands for prayer to say grace?

I vividly remember those moments when my mother showed me how to fold my fingers when we prayed. I remember that, for a while, I mixed up how to put together my hands.

I am sure you too have memories when your parents, grandparents were telling you to be thankful. I have another memory of when I received a cookie from a neighbour, my grandmother was asking me gently: “And now Frankie, what will you say?” And I said: “Thank you kindly”.

I have another story: I was only about 5 years old when our minister’s son, George, was about 3. We spent a lot of time together as families and friends. Once, the ministers’ wife, Elisabeth, told my grandmother that George did not eat enough or at all when he was alone, but he had a great appetite when he and I were having supper together. For this, the minister’s wife, Elisabeth, picked me up very often to have supper with George. I was taught, that after every supper, I should be polite to thank them for their hospitality, saying “Thank you kindly”. Elizabeth was a very nice woman, and she always said to me: “You are very welcome Frankie. Any time.” I remember clearly that I was wondering why she is humbling herself, saying to me “You are very welcome, Frankie. Any time.” I decided as a kid that I will save her from saying that to me anymore. So, one evening, as we finished the supper, I said to her: “Thank you kindly. You are welcome. Anytime”.

The reason I remember this is because the minister and his wife were laughing and laughing about me. Then they shared the story to my grandmother as they took me home. Next Sunday, on Thanksgiving Sunday, the minister shared from the pulpit how nice it is that I am raised to be thankful and polite.

Remembering and Giving Thanks are crucial in our human lives. If we don’t remember what we got from God and from each other, and we don’t give thanks, we have huge problems. Even the dog licks your hand after you give it something to eat. Why do we forget so often to kiss God’s hands, who gave us all we have?

Dear beloved, it is absolutely important and necessary, not only to teach our children to be nice, kind, polite and thankful, but also extremely important for us,

for you and for me, to recognize, to appreciate and to be thankful for God and for the people. We have to give thanks for everything, for all the blessings, for the daily bread and water, for the house where we live, for the clothes we have.

Now I am asking you all to share with me and with each other: What should we be thankful for and what are YOU personally thankful for today?

My second question is: What do you feel and how do you feel when you express gratitude?

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You are right – when we express gratitude, we are open to accept and to give LOVE. We are experiencing the love of God, the love of our spouse, our children, our siblings, the love of friends, the love of our immediate or extended family, and the love of neighbours. The gifts we share are uniting us.

Giving thanks helps us to recognize, appreciate and be grateful for the people, things, blessings, and **challenges** in our lives. When we express gratitude, we open to love - the love of God, the love of family, the love of friends, and the love of neighbours. Saying thanks can unite us in what we share: the gifts of life, love, family, and friendship, and even sorrow and suffering.

We all have thousands of reasons to be grateful, but at this moment, please stay with me and let us give thanks to God, especially for the love we received from our loved ones who already have gone before us. Let's be mindful and thankful for their souls and the way their lives touched ours.

I am very grateful for many of those who loved me, who touched and shaped my soul and shaped my spirituality, and who were supporting me even during my challenges.

I am very grateful for those who fed me, who taught me to walk, to laugh and to pray. I am very grateful for those who taught me to work for my daily bread and to appreciate everything that I can earn through my work.

I am very thankful for my loved ones, my wife, my children, my friends, for the patience they have for me.

I am grateful for Calvin staff and for the way we work, laugh and sometimes cry together, and for the support we are providing to each other.

And I am very thankful for YOU, for being here today and for being part of MY LIFE.

Thank you for loving me, supporting me and appreciating what I do for you. Thank you for putting up with my human weaknesses and helping me to correct those. And thank you, that, no matter what, we will stay, and work and pray together as a family, giving thanks to God and to each other.

Our Thanksgiving and our thankful hearts are the guarantee of a better future.

I wish you a blessed and joyful Thanksgiving weekend. Express your gratitude around the table towards those whom you love, and listen to their stories of why they love you so much and why they are so thankful for having you in their lives. May your celebration be filled with great memories that make your heart overflow with gratitude.

May we as Calvin members, sisters and brothers, be one in love and gratitude for blessings received and life shared.